

VZCZCXRO0878
OO RUEHCN
DE RUEHKT #0745/01 0751208
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 161208Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0775
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4057
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4325
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0301
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9404
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PRIORITY 0102
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2308
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3716
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9383
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0213
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0171
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0197
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0278
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0729
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY 0102
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 0285
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1737
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1086
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000745

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INS, PRM
NSC FOR RICHELSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2016
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: MARCH 16 REFUGEE UPDATE

REF: A. KATHMANDU 660

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 410

Classified By: CDA John Schlosser. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Nepal Country Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) agreed with Nepal that the Bhutanese government continued to stall on progress toward returning Bhutanese refugees in Nepal to Bhutan and UNHCR was prepared to assist countries to internationalize the issue. While His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) has yet to resume issuing exit permits to Tibetans processed by UNHCR, HMGN has been supportive of quiet movement of Tibetans into India. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reported that their construction of an extension to the Tibetan Reception Center (TRC) was on schedule; UNHCR said that crowding at the TRC had been relieved somewhat by some Tibetans making alternate arrangements of places to stay while in Kathmandu. The World Food Program (WFP) reported that their office in Damak (eastern Nepal) re-opened on March 15 after Maoists bombed the office on March 2. End Summary.

UNHCR Supports Internationalizing Bhutanese Refugee Issue

[1](#)2. (C) On March 10, Emboff briefed Abraham Abraham, Country Representative of the UNHCR, on SCA PDAS Camps' discussion on refugee issues with Foreign Minister Pandey (ref A). Upon learning that the Bhutanese FM had responded to Pandey's letter (ref B) by claiming that Bhutanese representatives

needed to visit the camps, Abraham shared Pandey's concern that such action was a stalling tactic. Abraham agreed that such a visit would only result in riots in the camps, leading to a call from Bhutan that Nepal was lawless and therefore no refugees from Nepal could return to Bhutan. However, Abraham hoped that, as Bhutan was showing no sign of progress, Nepal would hold its commitment to internationalize the issue in the next few months.

13. (C) Abraham stated that UNHCR was prepared to assist countries supporting internationalization of the Bhutanese refugee issue. He noted that Erika Feller, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, planned to visit Nepal in April, and could help advance the internationalization agenda. Abraham stressed the financial constraints that UNHCR Nepal was under, and asked if the USG might consider funding a Bhutanese refugee resettlement protection officer in Nepal, similar to the Tibetan protection officer USG currently funded, if and when HMGN allowed third country resettlement. He commented that UNHCR would continue to push HMGN for immediate issuance of exit permits for the small number of urgent, vulnerable cases, including three minor girls accepted by the US. He also promised to continue urging HMGN to allow UNHCR to do profiling of the camp population.

Quiet Progress On Tibetans Welcomed

14. (C) Abraham stated that, as a protection issue, he would prefer HMGN to resume issuing exit permits to Tibetans processed by UNHCR and waiting at the Tibetan Reception

KATHMANDU 00000745 002 OF 002

Center (TRC) to proceed to India. However, he was pleased to learn that Pandey was now at least supportive of quiet movement into India. He noted that UNHCR would continue to use their new arrangement to bus people at the TRC to India. Under the new arrangement, TRC staff accompanied those transiting to India on a bus chartered through a travel agency. UNHCR gave money to the individuals, who then had to buy their own tickets. If HMGN issued exit permits, a UNHCR staffer also accompanied the group, and UNHCR chartered the bus. As the TRC was using the same bus company, UNHCR stated that it was unlikely border guards noticed any difference. UNHCR noted that, although border guards were likely not privy to the Foreign Minister's tacit approval of the refugees leaving without exit permits, the guards had not stopped the first test bus. The UNHCR official commented that they were waiting for the Maoist-called blockade to end before sending out future buses. UNHCR was optimistic that the processes could continue without difficulty, though stressing that, for protection reasons, HMGN issuing exit permits was the preferred option. Abraham welcomed Pandey's renewed interest in registering the Tibetan Welfare Society (TWS) under a less controversial name. He promised to pursue the issue with HMGN.

TRC Construction On Schedule

15. (C) On March 15, LWF reported that, according to their construction consultant who was overseeing the construction, the extension at the TRC was proceeding on schedule and was expected to be completed before the fall rush of refugees. LWF had purchased supplies and the contractor had poured the foundation. A UNHCR representative, though noting he was not a construction expert, told Emboff that construction also appeared to be going well, with little disruption to the approximately 466 people who were at TRC waiting to transit to India. Because of the long delay in transiting people to India, UNHCR noted that an additional 120 people had arranged accommodation outside the TRC, with relatives or monasteries awaiting transportation to India. He noted that this also helped to ease the TRC congestion.

WFP Reports Damak Office Up and Running Soon

¶6. (C) The WFP sub-office in Damak (eastern Nepal) opened on March 15, following the March 2 Maoist bombing of the office. The bomb reportedly caused only minor damage and resulted in no delay of delivery of food to Bhutanese refugees. WFP told Emboff that the office had remained closed, not because of damage, but because the UN was waiting for the Maoists to give assurances that the office was not a Maoist target. The Maoists subsequently told the UN that the bombing had been a "mistake," paving the way for the office to reopen.

Comment

¶7. (C) Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan is currently visiting Nepal and Foreign Minister Pandey is accompanying him on his round of meetings. Thus we do not expect any movement on Tibetan refugees issues in the near future. However, UNHCR and the Embassy, are poised to resume efforts to advance Tibetan refugee issues.

SCHLOSSER